

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 01045

EXDIS

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS: PORG, MARR, MOPS, PLO, XF, LE, SY
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: POSSIBLE SYRIAN MOVE TO LITANI

REF: BEIRUT 1540

1. IN FURTHER FOLLOW-UP TO MAYNES/LEONARD TELCON AND
REFTEL, AMB LEONARD ON MARCH 22 DISCUSSED OUR CONCERN
OVER SITUATION IN AREA NORTH OF LITANI SEPARATELY WITH
FRENCH AND BRITISH PERMREPS LEPRETTE AND RICHARD. HE
REVIEWED IN SOME DETAIL WITH EACH OF THEM THE PROBLEM WE
SEE WITH PALESTINIANS IN CONTROL IN AREA BETWEEN LITANI
AND ZAHRANI RIVERS AND DISTURBING NEWS ABOUT ARRIVAL OF
IRAQIS. HE ALSO TOLD THEM OF OUR TALK WITH URQUHART
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(SEPTTEL) AND SIILASVUO APPOINTMENT TO SEE ASSAD SATURDAY,
MARCH 25.

2. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMB LEPRETTE, AMB LEONARD ASKED
THAT FRENCH CONSIDER HOW IT COULD BRING ITS DIPLOMATIC
INFLUENCE TO BEAR IN THIS SITUATION, IN WHICH ANSWER
MIGHT BE FOUND IN HAVING SYRIANS MOVE DOWN TO THE LITANI.

LEPRETTE SAID FRENCH HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH PLO AND HAD IN FACT TALKED WITH ARAFAT MORNING OF MARCH 22. ARAFAT HAD SAID THE PLO WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE CEASEFIRE AND WOULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT THE ISRAELIS. THE PLO WOULD NOT FIGHT THE FRENCH TROOPS BEING SENT TO AREA AS PART OF UN FORCE (UNIFIL), HOWEVER. IN THIS CONNECTION LEPRETTE NOTED FIRST 200 FRENCH TROOPS WOULD ARRIVE BEIRUT AIRPORT AT 5:00 AM MARCH 23, NEXT 170 ON MARCH 24 AND REMAINDER OF 750 TOTAL ON MARCH 25. HE SAID UN WOULD LIKE TO DEPLOY THEM IN TYRE AREA IF FEASIBLE.

3. AMB LEPRETTE GAVE NO FURTHER INDICATION OF ACTION HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE BUT SAID HE SHARED OUR CONCERN OVER POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION. HE WILL INFORM HIS GOVT OF OUR APPROACH AND BE IN TOUCH WITH US AFTER HEARING FROM PARIS.

4. AMB RICHARD AGREED THAT SITUATION IS EXTREMELY UNSTABLE AND THOUGHT SYRIANS WERE THE KEY. HE SAID HE WOULD TALK WITH LEBANESE AMB TUENI AND ALSO THOUGHT AN APPROACH TO KUWAITI AMB BISHARA MIGHT BE USEFUL. HE WOULD PLAN TO POINT OUT THAT IF ARABS WANT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL THEY MUST "STOP POURING PEOPLE" INTO AREA JUST NORTH OF LITANI. HE ALSO THOUGHT BRITISH DEMARCHE IN DAMASCUS, "FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH", WOULD BE POSSIBLE. HE HAD NO OTHER SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE. LEONARD
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